

Message Text

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ACTION TRSE-00

INFO OCT-01 NEA-06 ISO-00 SP-02 AID-05 EB-04 NSC-05 RSC-01

CIEP-01 SS-15 STR-01 OMB-01 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00

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TAGS: EAID, BEXP, SA, US

SUBJECT: NEW STAFF FOR RIYADH; CRITICISM OF WORKING GROUPS

REF: A) STATE 230809; B) JIDDA 6004

SUMMARY: THE SAUDI COORDINATOR OF THE JOINT U.S.-
SAUDI COMMISSIONS WAS LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT
NEW USG TEAM MEMBERS IN RIYADH, AND REQUESTED THAT
NO DECISION BE MADE PRIOR TO DECEMBER MEETINGS.
IN PURSUING THE MATTER, THE AMBASSADOR HEARD STRONG
CRITICISM OF PERFORMANCE OF WORKING GROUPS TO DATE
FROM HISHAM NAZIR, MINISTER OF PLANNING. NAZIR
WAS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED THAT USG FAILURE TO
FORCE SAUDI'S TO PROPERLY DEFINE ACTIVITIES AND
GOALS OF EXPERTS IS PREJUDICING THE CHANCES OF
THOSE EXPERTS TO PRODUCE SOMETHING WORTHWHILE. END
SUMMARY

1. THE AMBASSADOR RAISED THE SUBJECT WITH
DR. SULAYMAN SOLAIM, SAUDI IN CHARGE OF THE
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JOINT U.S.-SAUDI COMMISSIONS. DR. DOLAIM SAID

THAT HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE PREMATURE TO INCREASE THE STAFF NOW. HE WAS WORKING WELL WITH FSO SHIRL MACARTHUR AND IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO SUSPEND DECISION ON NEW OFFICERS IN RIYADH UNTIL AFTER THE COMMISSIONS MEET IN DECEMBER. HE SAID HE THOUGHT BY THAT TIME WE SHOULD HAVE DEVELOPED A NEW METHOD OF INTEGRATING U.S. BUSINESS COMMUNITY INTO THE U.S.-SAUDI COMMISSIONS. SOLAMIN SAID THAT IF ANY MORE AMERICANS WERE TO COME IN THEY WOULD HAVE TO BE CLEARED THROUGH THE FOREIGN OFFICE IF THEY ARE TO HAVE DIPLOMATIC STATUS AND HE THOUGHT THE FOREIGN OFFICE WOULD NOT APPROVE. HE SUGGESTED THEREFORE THAT NEW TEAM MEMBERS, WHEN THEY DO COME, HAVE THE SAME STATUS AS THE AID MISSION OR OTHER OFFICIAL AMERICANS LIVING IN RIYADH, I.E., THAT THEY BE ON OFFICIAL NOT DIPLOMATIC PASSPORTS AND THEY NOT HAVE DIPLOMATIC STATUS. SOLAIM SUGGESTED THAT THE AMBASSADOR DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH HISHAM NAZIR, MINISTER OF PLANNING. HE DID.

2. NAZIR, WHO IS ALWAYS BLUNT AND OUTSPOKEN, AGREED WITH SOLAIM. AND HE SAID THAT HE HOPED WHEN WE DO SEND ADDITIONAL PEOPLE TO SAUDI ARABIA THAT THEIR DUTIES WOULD BE VERY STRICTLY CIRCUMSCRIBED. HE SAID THAT HE THOUGHT FROM THE BEGINNING OUR PLAN TO BRING AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN IN UNDER U.S. GOVERNMENT UMBRELLA WAS UNWORKABLE AND HE WAS NOT SURPRISED THAT U.S. BUSINESS REJECTED IT SO BRUTALLY. HE SAID THAT WHAT HE HAD ALWAYS WANTED WAS ONLY A SMALL GROUP IN RIYADH TO WORK WITH THE SAUDIS AND TO FACILITATE THE WORK OF U.S. COMPANIES HERE; THIS WOULD BE IN MAKING APPOINTMENTS, ARRANGING CONTACTS, HOTEL RESERVATIONS, ETC.; IN OTHER WORDS, A SERVICE UNIT. AND A SIMILAR GROUP IN WASHINGTON TO WORK WITH THE AMERICAN TEAM THERE TO BRING SAUDI INTERESTS TO THE ATTENTION OF AMERICAN BUSINESS AND GET THEM OUT TO THE COUNTRY AND ACTUALLY BIDDING ON NEW PROJECTS.

3. NAZIR SAID THAT SAUDI ARABIA HAS ENOUGH PLANS. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WHAT IT HAS TO DO NOW IS TO PUT THEM INTO EFFECT. AND HE HOPES THAT THE U.S. CAN HELP DO THIS. HE SAID HE THOUGHT THE WORKING GROUPS WERE NOT SUCCESSFUL (THE AMBASSADOR DEMURRED STRONGLY; HE SAID THAT EXPOSING AMERICANS TO SAUDI ARABIA AND ITS PROBLEMS, AND BRINGING PROMINENT SAUDIS TO AMERICA AND MEETING WITH AMERICAN BUSINESS WAS EXTREMELY USEFUL.) NAZIR AGREED THAT IT COULD HAVE SOME USE TO THAT EXTENT BUT ASKED "WHAT HAVE

THEY REALLY ACCOMPLISHED?"

4. NAZIR SAID THAT HE HAD AN URGENT REQUEST THAT WAS THAT THE UNITED STATES "NOT INDULGE THE SAUDIS." HE SAID THAT WHEN THEY ASKED THE UNITED STATES FOR AN EXPERT THE UNITED STATES MUST DEMAND TO KNOW WHAT THIS EXPERT IS EXPECTED TO DO AND THIS EXPERT SHOULD NOT BE SENT UNTIL THE SAUDIS HAVE DEFINED THEIR WISHES. HE SAID "YOU WILL DO US NO SERVICE BY ACCEPTING OUR STUPIDITY AND OUR INEFFICIENCIES." NAZIR QUOTED THE CASE OF THE STATISTICAL DEPARTMENT ASKING FOR A U.S. EXPERT TO COME OUT. HE CAME, LOOKED AT THE DOOSIERS AND REPORTED "YOU NEED BETTER STATISTICS." NAZIR SAID THAT ANY CHILD COULD HAVE REACHED THAT CONCLUSION. THIS WASN'T THE FAULT OF THE U.S. AND IT CERTAINLY WASN'T THE FAULT OF THE EXPERT WHO CAME. BUT HE HAD NO GUIDELINES AND WAS THEREFORE UNABLE TO GIVE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS. NAZIR ASKED THAT THIS NOT HAPPEN AGAIN.

5. COMMENT: NAZIR'S IMPATIENCE IS UNDERSTANDABLE AND HIS CRITICISMS ARE AT LEAST PARTIALLY VALID. PART OF THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE SAUDIS DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY WANT AND IT IS LEFT UP TO THE AMERICAN EXPERTS TO TELL THEM WHAT THEY NEED TO ASK FOR BEFORE THEY CAN ASK FOR IT. IN OTHER WORDS, THE AMERICANS COULD CRYSTALLIZE THE SAUDI THINKING TO THE POINT WHERE THE SAUDIS COULD INDEED SEEK THE ADVICE THEY NEED. NAZIR'S IDEA OF TWO SMALL GROUPS IN RIYADH AND WASHINGTON STRIKES US AS ESSENTIALLY WHAT WE HAVE PROPOSED FOR QUITE SOME TIME. PERHAPS IT COULD BE MORE AMBITIOUS AT SOME TIME BUT FOR THE TIME BEING WE SHOULD PERHAPS LIMIT OURSELVES TO THIS.

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